

Week Ending Friday, February 14, 1997

**Message on the Observance of
Id al-Fitr**

February 7, 1997

On behalf of all Americans, I want to extend greetings to all Muslims in the United States and around the world as you celebrate Id al-Fitr.

This celebration, which marks the end of a month of fasting and sacrifice, is an occasion for rejoicing. It is an opportunity for Muslims to gather in joy, as well as in remembrance of those less fortunate.

It is also an opportunity for all of us to rededicate ourselves, not only to achieving spiritual growth, but also to the cause of peace between all peoples of the earth. It is our common challenge and our shared responsibility to create a better world for ourselves and our children.

To all who practice the faith of Islam, in the United States and abroad, Hillary and I extend our very best wishes. May peace be with you and your families, and may God grant you health and prosperity now and in the year ahead.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 8, 1997

The President. Good morning. This morning the Vice President and I are going to talk about the progress we've made to bring 21st century technology to our students and our schools.

In my State of the Union Address Tuesday night, I issued a call to action to all Americans to prepare our people for the 21st century. The very heart of this mission and my number one priority these next 4 years is to give our children the best education in the world.

Education is about opportunity, about giving our children the tools to make the most of their God-given potential. This is a goal every American must share for every other American. That's why I'm calling for a new, nonpartisan commitment to education. During the cold war, America had a bipartisan commitment to foreign policy, and politics stopped at the water's edge. Today, education is a critical national security issue for our future, and our politics must stop at the schoolhouse door.

My plan calls for world-class standards for students, teachers, and schools. It calls for expanding Head Start, rebuilding crumbling schools, opening the doors of college wider than ever before, and ensuring that workers can learn and earn for a lifetime.

To give our children the best education, we must help them to harness the powerful forces of technology. That's why we've challenged America to connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. For the first time in history, children in the most isolated rural towns, the most comfortable suburbs, and the poorest inner-city schools will have the same access to the same universe of knowledge.

We've come a long way toward meeting that goal, and we owe much of that progress to the leadership of the Vice President who will now say a few words about our efforts.

[At this point, the Vice President made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. We are making a lot of progress. Today we're issuing a report prepared by Secretary Riley and the Department of Education that shows that 65 percent of our schools are now connected to the Internet, almost double the number of schools connected in 1994. But it's not enough to connect every school; we must connect every classroom and every library as well. Since 1994, we have more than quadrupled the

number of classrooms with a direct link to the Internet. But the vast majority still do not have access. That's why we're now launching an aggressive, three-part plan to finish the job.

First, my balanced budget plan makes an unprecedented commitment to education technology, doubling the technology literacy initiative the Vice President just mentioned and providing a total of \$500 million for computers, teacher training, and educational software for our schools.

Second, we're working to ensure that every school and library can afford the Internet. Under the Telecommunications Act, the Federal Communications Commission is now developing a plan to give schools and libraries access to the Internet at a dramatically discounted rate. Fees for most schools will be cut in half. Fees for our poorest schools will be almost free. I urge the FCC to act quickly. And I call upon the telecommunications industry to support this effort.

Third, this April 19th, parents, teachers, business people, and volunteers from all walks of life will answer our call and hold NetDays in all 50 States, connecting tens of thousands of schools, classrooms, and libraries to the Internet.

By doubling our investment in education technology, by dramatically lowering the Internet rates for schools and libraries by mobilizing Americans all across the country to help wire our schools, we will meet our goal of connecting every classroom and library to the information superhighway by the year 2000. That's how we must prepare our children for the 21st century, with the full promise of the information age at their fingertips. And it's an important way to give our children the world's best education and the chance to make the most of their own lives.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:38 p.m. on February 7 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 8.

Proclamation 6972—National Child Passenger Safety Week, 1997

February 8, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children are our Nation's most precious gift, and one of our most profound responsibilities is protecting their health, well-being, and safety. Nowhere is this duty more critical than on America's streets and highways.

Automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for America's young people. It is tragic that a high proportion of these deaths could be prevented, but are not. For example, we know that seat belts save lives—last year they prevented the deaths of almost 10,000 Americans—and, yet, many still fail to wear them.

I encourage all Americans to take a few simple steps to ensure that their families travel safely. The most important rule is also the simplest: The safest place for children is the back seat. Also, parents and guardians must always make sure that children are secured, either in a locked seat belt or in an appropriate child safety seat.

I commend the Department of Transportation for its "Patterns for Life" program, begun in 1996 to focus attention on correct child safety seat use and the proper positioning of children and their safety seats away from air bags. Working through national safety organizations and State public safety and highway offices, this program offers a network of qualified child passenger safety trainers to provide communities with the valuable resources they need to reduce motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries.

Laws exist in every State and the District of Columbia that require proper restraints for younger children. However, 40 percent of our children under five are still not properly restrained. We must do better to enforce the existing laws and protect our precious cargo.

The steps we take now will make our roads safer and our children more secure. My Ad-